

In a recent article for *Texas Saltwater Fishing Magazine*, I described the process I like to use when faced with a situation in which signs of life indicating the presence of fish are non-existent. Basically, I favor fishing micro-spots which have proven track records (both recent and long-term), not only in the basic time-frame or season, but given similar climatic conditions, including air and water temperatures, wind speed and direction.

When fishing these small-scale areas, I like to focus on specific parts of the area which are most likely to be holding fish, then "beat on them" with repeated casts without moving much with my feet. In essence, what I'm attempting to do is identify exactly where fish are probably located, then using the number of casts to increase the likelihood of placing a lure within close proximity of the head of the fish. In a situation where no signs of life are showing, I assume the trout will be inactive, unwilling to chase after a lure.

The lure I prefer to use most of the time in a situation like this is a soft plastic worm, since I perceive it to be the easiest thing to make fish strike when they are less aggressive.

On Wednesday the 27th of March, I found myself in just such a situation while fishing with clients. We left the dock in darkness and began fishing under a bright moon. Coming off a cold front, water temperatures were in the high 50s, having been well over 70 before the front hit. Soon after we started fishing, I could tell it might be tough to get a bite. The moonlight glinting off the waves made it easy to see, but no signs of life were present, and the bites did not come on Corkies and topwaters like I expected.

Eventually, one of my customers caught a six pound trout on a soft plastic, verifying what I hoped--some of the big trout which had been staying on this shoreline were in fact still there, though it was impossible to "see" it through the use of "indicators" like jumping mullet or swirls or wakes.

The bite was excruciatingly slow, but as the moon settled closer to the horizon and the sun began to rise behind us, I knew better than to head off looking for some other, "better" pattern. I committed to fishing the pattern until after the moon had set and the sun was higher in the sky. We were casting at potholes lying close to grass mats on the bank.

Before we left the spot where the six pounder bit, we managed to catch three more trout, all but one of which measured more than 22 inches. The bite then died out completely at the location, though we were persistent in making many casts to the sweet spots.

I decided to move to another location close by, one with nearly identical features. We were able to scratch out two more trout there, both of which measured about 23 inches. By then, the whole group of us were throwing soft plastics exclusively.

Eventually, I made more moves, fishing spots with bare, sandy pockets close to thick grass mats. Significantly, cloud cover made for a dark day, allowing us a better chance to coax strikes from the fish in the clear water. In total, we wound up catching 12 trout between 22 and 29 inches, and we hooked 4 other big ones that shook off before we could land them.

The catch was not a 10 out of 10 for March, to be sure, but it was a productive and satisfying outcome, especially on a day in which I NEVER SAW A SINGLE MULLET JUMP.

The whole scenario reinforced the contentions I stated in the magazine article. When faced with a situation in which no signs of life are present, the best strategy is to fish small-scale, proven spots with a patient and persistent mind set.